
Commuters in Tokyo are being greeted with the friendliest of welcomes. Some of the busiest railway stations in the world have installed computerised 'smile scanners' to help employees deliver a better service. From Tokyo, here is our correspondent Roland Buerk:

Tokyo has some of the busiest train stations in the world. But now passengers can be assured of a friendly welcome from staff **no matter** how **hard-pressed** they are thanks to technology.

The **computerised** 'smile **scanner**' works by calculating the **optimum curvature** of the lips. Those with a low score are given words of advice, such as, 'you look too serious'. The idea is that workers **maintain their computer-approved grins** throughout the day.

Although the railway company says the smile scan system is not **compulsory**, all staff at the station have used it.

TAICHI TAKAHASHI FROM KEIHIN EXPRESS RAILWAY: I don't think we've had that much opportunity to stare at our faces that closely and for that long to check our **facial expressions**. The employees say the scan has helped them check their **facial expressions**, which helped them communicate more effectively with the customers.

So far the smile scanners have been installed at 15 train stations on the company's network, leaving **grumpy** workers with few places to hide.

Roland Buerk, BBC News, Tokyo

Vocabulary and definitions

no matter	regardless of, not taking into account
hard-pressed	having a lot of difficulties doing something (especially because there is not enough money or, as here, time)
computerised	using a computer (to do something that was previously done by people)
scanner	a device that puts something (most often visual images) into digital form
optimum	best possible
curvature	degree of curving; here, shape
maintain their computer-approved grins	here, keep smiling in a way that the scanner 'thinks' is acceptable
compulsory	mandatory, unavoidable
facial expressions	different ways in which people use their faces to put their message across (e.g. a smile, to make others more at ease, or a frown, to show you are feeling aggressive or unsure of something) that form part of human body language
grumpy	in bad mood, sullen

More on this story: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8170088.stm>

Read and listen to the story and the vocabulary online:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/wordsinthenews/2009/07/090731_witn_japan_smile.shtml